433 agriculturally than the Heart Butte District, and that in general in both districts allottees or spouses of allottees with a racial heritage of one-half or less Blackfeet ancestry were without question the more prosperous farmers and ranchers and that these people held most of the few non-agricultural or salaried agricultural jobs.

474 128 Another and certainly critical topic discussed in this portion of the chapter concerns the economic determinants of the formation of farming and ranching cooperatives consisting of related or unrelated persons who shared land, equipment and labor to farm or ranch or both, and acreages shared in common. These cooperatives will be analyzed statistically in an effort to determine whether people combined their resources to maximize their resources for mutual benefit, or if such co-ops were merely fortuitous. In regard to farming and ranching co-ops, I will explore the formation of multiple-family households, ages of productive farmers and ranchers, and attempt to demonstrate the contribution some economic measures made to the family cycle of the past.

433 463

Economic Comparisons of the Two Rural Districts

Eighty per cent of the people in the Old Agency District were engaged in farming (mainly) and ranching, and 65 of the total of 82 households were involved in agricultural pursuits. Thus about 80 per cent of all households and persons were so engaged. Only about 40 per cent (34 of 84) and 44 per cent of the 396 persons recorded in the survey of the Heart Butte District households were engaged in farming.

433 The difference in the extent of farming and ranching between the two

13: Robbins E-4,5 (1967-1970) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

433 districts is partially accounted for by better agricultural conditions in Old Agency District; there land is more open, less rocky, and enjoys more frost-free days than in the Heart Butte District.

423 241 Families that farmed in Old Agency District cultivated an average of 23.3 acres, with a range of one to 234. Heart Butte District farms averaged only about five acres, with a range of less than an acre to 50 acres. Of the 98 families in the Heart Butte District only 40 farmed or ranched, a 41 per cent representation. The 40 families made up 34 households; 38 of the families farmed or ranched in cooperation with other families. Only two families farmed or ranched alone. The 38 cooperative farming and ranching families comprised sixteen co-op units, eleven of which were composed of related families in multiple-family households (fathers-married sons, fathers--married daughters, mothers-married sons, mothers-married daughters). One of these formed the only ranching unit (co-op or otherwise) recorded in the district. Each of the eleven formed a single cooperative unit. Of all the families involved in the co-ops, 26 were closely related; twelve were not related (see Diagrams IV and V).

162 597 592 474 474 433

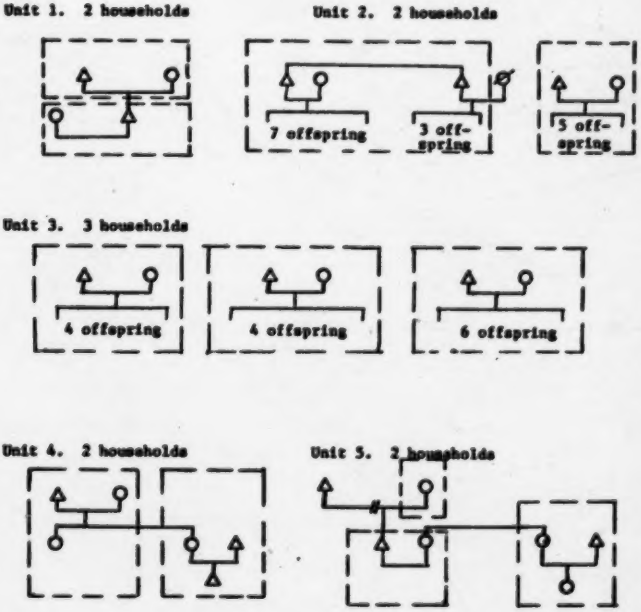
127 128 I use here principally the data recorded in the Old Agency District regarding farming and ranching because there was considerably more agricultural activity in that district. Because of this, I have enough data with which to test postdictive hypotheses about the formation of multiple-family households and agricultural co-ops. The data allow for generalizations about who was farming, the age of the family head or his or her spouse (if any), the number of acres cultivated, animals kept,

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 64]

13: Robbins E-4,5 (1967-1970) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

Diagram IV

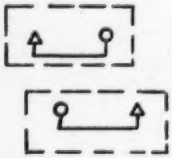
SIXTEEN FARMING AND RANCHING CO-OPS, HEART BUTTE DISTRICT, 1921*



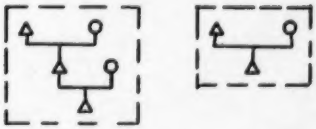
592
474
471

Diagram IV (Continued)

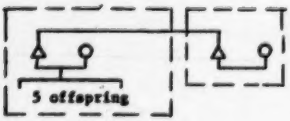
Unit 6. 2 households



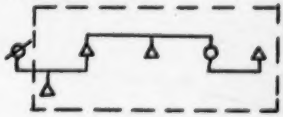
Unit 7. 2 households



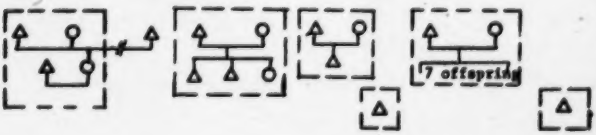
Unit 8. 2 households



Unit 9. 1 household



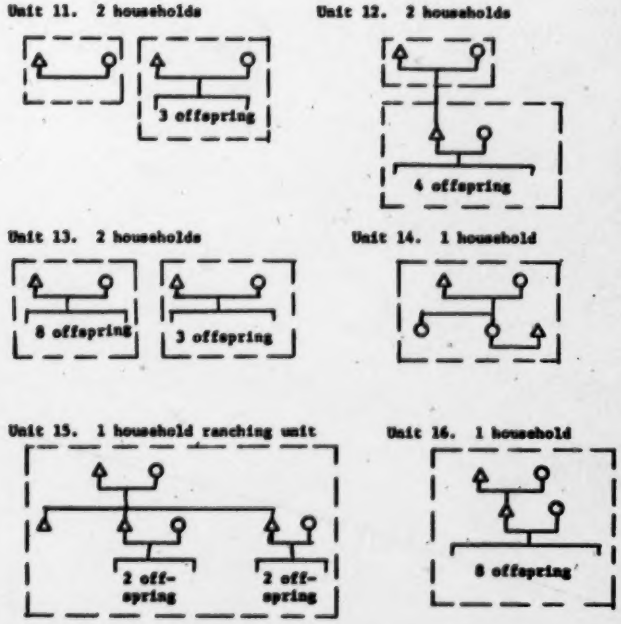
Unit 10. 6 households



13: Robbins E-4,5 (1967-1970) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

592
424
421

Diagram IV (Continued)



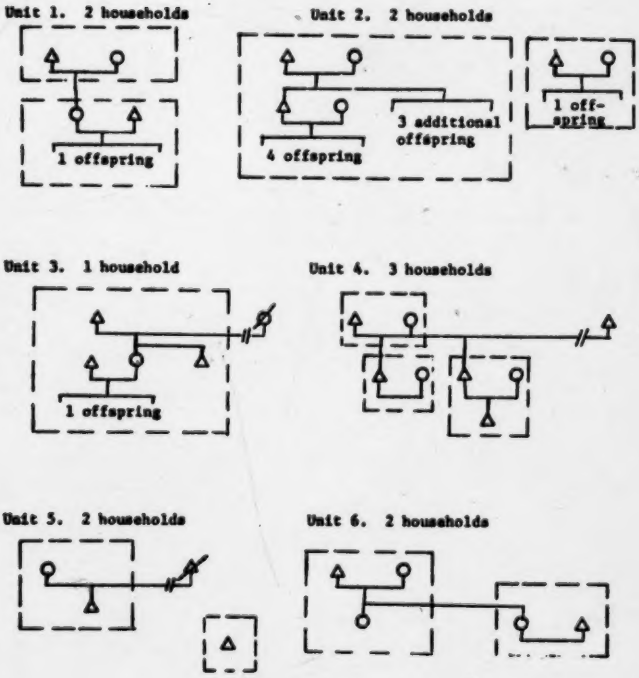
*These are multiple and single family units, household boundaries are outlined in broken lines.

13: Robbins E-4,5 (1967-1970) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

592
474
471

Diagram V

TWENTY-ONE FARMING AND RANCHING CO-OPS, OLD AGENCY DISTRICT, 1921[a]

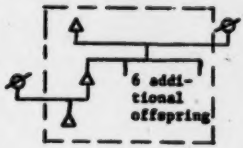


13: Robbins E-4,5 (1967-1970) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

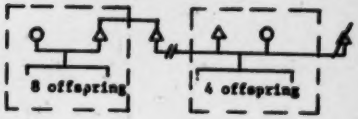
582
454
451

Diagram V (Continued)

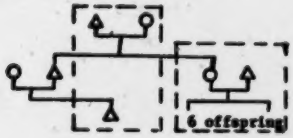
Unit 7. 1 household



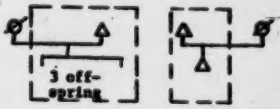
Unit 8. 2 households



Unit 9. 2 households

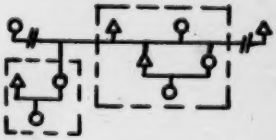


Unit 10. 2 households



Unit 11. 2 households

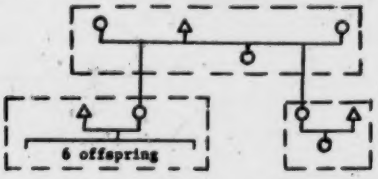
Unit 12. 2 households



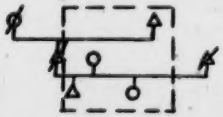
592
414
411

Diagram V (Continued)

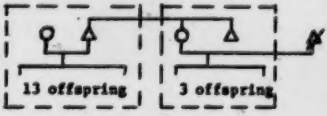
Unit 13. 3 households--polygynous household in ascending generation.



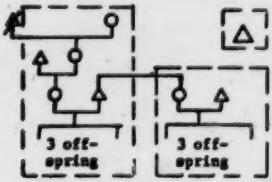
Unit 14. 1 household



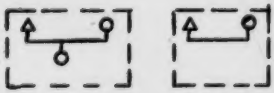
Unit 15. 2 households



Unit 16. 3 households



Unit 17. 2 households

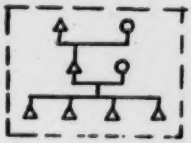


13: Robbins E-4,5 (1967-1970) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

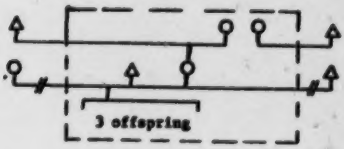
582
414
471

Diagram V (Continued)

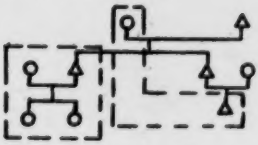
Unit 18. 1 household



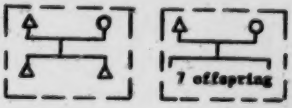
Unit 19. 1 household



Unit 20. 2 households



Unit 21. 2 households



*These are multiple and single family units. Household boundaries are outlined by broken lines.

Close inspection of Diagrams IV and V reveals that though the families were strongly urged to farm on an individual basis, they nonetheless found it to their advantage in both districts to pool labor, equipment, and land so that permanent or seasonal mutual assistance groups were formed. Secondly, of the farm co-ops, a preponderance were composed of related families. Relationships among those forming co-ops were close, as the diagrams show. Moreover, it is evident that land ownership was critical in the formation of cooperatives and in determining the settlement pattern. A similar pattern survives, indeed is fully entrenched, today in the land clusters analyzed in Chapter II. Meager resources persist as do kin units which cluster around these resources. This is a long-standing pattern of prolonged impoverishment.

The related families in the cooperatives lived with or near each other. Those unrelated families that joined into cooperatives did not possess land suitable for farming; many, in fact, are recorded as moving from the foothills to valleys from season to season so that they could unite with other families to pool labor for planting and harvesting, yet lived by their own devices during the remainder of the year. An extreme example of far-reaching cooperation is Unit Number 9 in Diagram IV which consisted of six households, three of which were related. They collectively farmed a total of but 45 acres in the Heart Butte District.

Some Comparisons with the 1966 Sample--The Heart Butte District Past and Present

The following comparisons of agricultural pursuits in the past and in 1966 deal only with the Heart Butte District. In the Heart Butte

District in 1921 four extended family households (nine families) and one joint family household (two families) farmed or ranched to make up five separate cooperative units. This accounts for eleven of 23 families in multiple-family households, just under half of the total. I cannot be certain if each family co-op which resided under a single roof joined together for the sole purposes of farming and ranching. It is my impression that only one of the five households had formed a multiple-family unit before the 1921 farm program began. This is the three-family household which, according to the survey records, had been operating a cattle ranch for several years prior to 1921.

In the following 2 x 2 table (Table 7) I test to determine if families were joining under a single roof for the express purpose of mutually exploiting agricultural resources. The entire Heart Butte sample is included. Though the distribution in the table is not statistically significant there is an indication that families were beginning to consolidate agricultural resources. The twelve families in multiple-family households in the lower left quadrant of Table 7 were likely consolidating non-agricultural resources (federal annuities, meager cash, dwellings and dwelling land). It should be stressed that it is not necessary for families to live under a single roof in order to pool their resources and vice versa. I will show in the following discussion of current land use (and as was shown in Chapter II) that families (1) join resources to use land for productive enterprises, and (2) cluster in separate households on an elder kinsman's land to avoid payment of lease money for land use and rental of dwelling and to be near kinsmen

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 68]

592
M74
128

Table 7

MULTIPLE-FAMILIES AND FARMING OR RANCHING

	Family In Multiple-Family Households	In Single Family Households	
Farming or Ranching	11	29	40
Not Farming or Ranching	12	46	58
	23	75	98

τ_c = .030, X^2 (not significant)

for purposes of sharing meager incomes.

Ranching is a productive and at least marginally profitable current pursuit on the reservation. In 1966, only three of the 1921 Heart Butte District cooperative ranching units were still viable. These are units one, five and fifteen. See Diagram VI for a schematic ordering of these units. The head of the conjugal pair in the descending generation in unit Number 1 now ranches on his deceased father-in-law's land (land inherited by the female spouse) in cooperation with his son-in-law. These extant units are diagrammed as follows, along with an additional separate single family unit.

Units 5 and 1, like the 1921 units discussed and diagrammed above, are cooperative in nature, but mutual assistance relationships do not tie all the current households together in direct lines. The relationships which obtain between units 5 and 1 require detailed analysis to show how the persons are tied together economically, how the units manage resources, and the forms of assistance that are necessary for profitable use of resources.

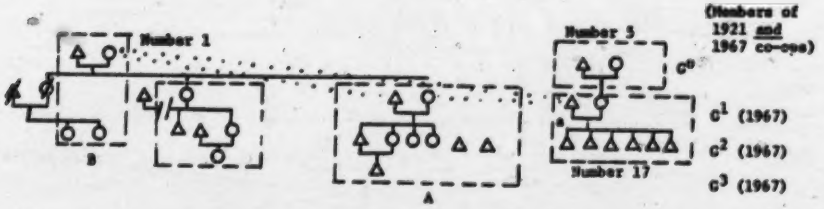
Land tenure divides the units into three separate enterprises. All families in Number 1 live on land owned by the female in the G^0 generation, though leased acreage also is used in the ranching operation. Numbers 5 and 17, too, own and lease land. Using land, then, as the criterion for unit boundaries, there are three distinct units. But if, as is done for the 1921 co-ops, mutual assistance is the criterion, then there are two distinct units (1 and 5) and an intermediary household (17) which cooperates with the other two. There is no direct

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 70]

13: Robbins E-4,5 (1967-1970) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

Diagram VI

COOPERATIVE RANCHING UNITS, HEART BUTTE DISTRICT,
1921 AND 1966



a = son-in-law to male in Number 5. Stands in intermediary relationship between Number 5, Number 1, and Household A.

A = Extended family household headed by son-in-law to Male in ascending generation in Number 1.

B = Extended family household headed by divorced daughter of male in ascending generation of Number 1.

..... = Indicates mutual assistance with land, livestock and labor.

_ _ _ = Indicates boundaries of households.

476
592
474
178
128

mutual assistance between 1 and 5.

Land owned by Number 17 is contiguous with land owned by Number 1. Number 17 provides equipment and labor for Number 1 and receives a portion of the hay crop in return for his services. The same assistance is given to Number 5, and 5, in turn, gives a portion of his crops to Number 17.

The conjugal pairs in the G^0 generation who head units 1 and 5 are conjugal pairs in the first descending generation in the same units in the 1921 sample. The extended family household, indicated by the letter A and headed by a male in the G^1 generation, provides more than half of the labor for unit Number 1. Extended family "B", headed by a divorced female in generation G^1 is only casually involved in the ranch operation. She owns a few cattle and her former spouse assisted with labor.

592
474
434
464

The income from these three enterprises is not substantial, quantity of land and livestock are not sufficient to maintain individual families. The male in G^0 (unit Number 1) could not sustain himself without help from his son-in-law and male "a." The two males with large families both drive school buses in the winter months to supplement their income and the female spouse of the head of extended family A works part-time to bring in additional needed income. Furthermore, the dependent nuclear family in extended family household A set up a separate household on the paternal grandmother's land while I was in Heart Butte in 1967. The young male now works in Browning full-time. The female head in extended family household B receives ADC, and her

592
434
464

[65]

592 married daughter receives an allowance from her spouse who is in the
434 U. S. Army. Thus, the cattle enterprises described in detail here are
464 closely interlocked with one another and the enterprises themselves are
(65) clearly not sufficiently productive to support the large number of persons in the co-op units.

128 The Bureau of Indian Affairs estimates that at least 200 cattle
434 (a self-sustaining herd) and approximately twenty acres per animal are
592 necessary to support a single, debt-free family. On this basis, the
(65) five households in Diagram VI would need a combined total of 1,000 animals and 20,000 acres (on a per household basis). I do not know the specific number of animals or acres now controlled, but I do know that resources, in each case, are marginal. The fact that supplemental cash resources are needed (wage labor, ADC, etc.) and that intensive pooling of labor and equipment is conducted, attest to shortages of agricultural and financial resources. Ranching by itself does not provide these families with sufficient incomes; other sources are needed to allow them some independence.

592 I have not as yet discussed unit Number 15 in the 1921 sample.
414 This unit is still viable, as I mentioned below, and was until 1970
233 headed by the unmarried male shown in the diagram of the 1921 co-op. I did not interview the now deceased elder head, but I learned that he operated a ranch with two married sons, both of whom lived adjacent to their father's home. The three families controlled more than 20,000 acres of heirship land and land leased from others. This unit shows that the 1921 pattern of operating the ranch with lineal kin linked

agnatically has persisted to the present. Unit 15 is unusually prosperous insofar as Blackfeet-owned and controlled ranching units are concerned. Since the death in 1970 of the elder head, the enterprise continues. It is now operated by the two married sons who remain on the ranch.

How to achieve land consolidation among Blackfeet ranchers has long been a pressing problem. Since allotment the extent of land parcels has diminished with each passing generation. Unit 15 was established by a White man married to an allotted full-blood Blackfeet woman. The man was acquainted with ranching techniques and capitalization. As years passed he and his son leased more and more Blackfeet heirship land adjacent to their own; they raised sheep initially but soon shifted to cattle. The cards were stacked in favor of this operation from the start; tribal members in the same district simply did not possess the technical and financial resources to compete effectively. Here is a case in which substantial, rather than meager or moderate, resources bring families together in mutual cooperation over a long period of time.

Old Agency District Economics

It was stated below that only 40 of the families farmed or ranched in the Heart Butte District in 1921 while 77 per cent of the families in the Old Agency District were active agriculturally.

My effort here is to use the detailed acreage data to make a test of the hypothesis that meager resources correlate with inter-family and

121 intra-household co-ops. In the discussion and analysis of Heart Butte
128 District families and households, it was demonstrated that co-ops formed to exploit meager resources, but I was unable to make a statistical test that would convincingly confirm relationships between measurable quantitative data and family types. Fortunately, I am able to perform such a test with the Old Agency District data.

128 Of the 74 farming and ranching families, 45 were in co-ops; 37
474 of these were closely related (82 per cent). Twenty-six of the 38
592 farming and ranching co-op families in the Heart Butte District were closely related, or 70 per cent. Hence, the two districts were similar in the relatedness of families that formed co-ops. Furthermore, the co-ops in the Heart Butte District averaged 2.2 families and in the Old Agency District the average was 2.3, another similarity. These figures suggest that there was a general limit to the number of families that could receive some benefits from consolidating meager acres, but it might also indicate the number of available parties that could join in farming with others. The greatest number of families in any Old Agency District co-op was four compared with an extreme of six in the Heart Butte District. In both of these there were single males with some land which increased the number of families per unit. It can readily be seen from the co-op diagrams that most co-ops cluster near the average of 2.2 and 2.3 families per unit.

162 In the entire Old Agency District there were 24 multiple-family
474 households. Twenty-two of these formed co-ops (92 per cent). This is
592 a very high percentage, higher than the representative percentage in

the Heart Butte District. We will see that these multiple-family farming co-ops cultivated fewer acres per family than single family farming units; hence these cases lend strong support to my hypothesis that the fewer the resources per family the more likely families are to joing together for mutual aid.

Another and more critical comparisons shows that of the 74 farming and ranching families in the Old Agency District, 45 formed co-ops (60 per cent) and many of these, like their Heart Butte District counterparts, are closely related. Thus 40 per cent of the farming and ranching families in the Old Agency District worked without assistance from other families, while only two families in the Heart Butte District farmed or ranched alone. This comparison strongly supports my hypothesis because we saw that the average number of acres under cultivation in the Heart Butte District was but five while in the Old Agency District the average was 23.3; hence the more acres, the less the likelihood of participation in mutual family enterprises.

None of the families in the Old Agency District was truly prosperous, yet some, because of above average resources, were able to remain to themselves on a self-sustaining basis. My first statistical test attempts to determine if 36 or more acres resulted in the independence of those who managed resources of this extent. Table 8 tests the hypothesis that families cultivating 36 or more acres are likely to farm without assistance from others. I wish to show here the affect that far above average resources have on family cooperation with others. This distribution points out almost the reverse of what one might

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 76]

128
454
592
241

Table 8

ACRES CULTIVATED AND PARTICIPATION IN CO-OPS. OLD AGENCY DISTRICT, 74 FAMILIES, 1921

	36 or more acres	Less than 36 acres	
Families Farming Alone	7	22	29
Farming with Other Families	1	44	45
	8	66	74

$\gamma_c = .126$; $\chi^2 = 9.55$; p .01

128 expect--that the more acres cultivated the more hands required to do
474 the job, but I point out that since only the exceptional family culti-
241 vated as much as 235 acres, it seems that individual families with equip-
592 ment and teams of horses were quite able to manage their acreages.
Presumably their resources, cash or otherwise, permitted an economic-
ally independent existence. That these families could have sought or
offered aid even in the absence of nearby kin is clear. Others farmed
with non-kin; although kin aid was the nearly universal practice.

241 The one exception--the party in the lower left quadrant of the
464 table--shared its harvest from its 235 acres with a hired hand and his
128 family. The hired hand, who owned no land, merely received payment for
his labor. One could eliminate this case from the list of co-ops by
arguing that share-cropping is here a wage. I have chosen to label
this case a co-op unit because of the comments made in the survey
volume; there was a strong indication of mutual assistance between
these unrelated families.

596 No multiple-family household in either district cultivated more
474 than twenty acres. Again, the hypothesis is supported: families
182 cooperate mutually to exploit meager resources and the obverse is that
the greater the resources (up to a point) the greater the occurrence of
independent nuclear family households. But this generalization by no
means applies unerringly to all families and households. We saw, for
example, a large three-household, three-family ranching co-op (unit 15
in the Heart Butte District discussed earlier) which today is immensely
successful through family consolidation of growing access to land and

596 474 182 animals from decade to decade and unity of kin effort. But these resources overwhelmingly out-match the relatively successful farming units. It appears to me that resources of sizable proportions (real wealth) attracts and jells extended kin units through joint family capitalization, job acquisition and political favoratism (see Houghton 1968), while mild success in the wage labor market and marginal success in farming (of 36 to 235 acres or so in the past, for example) merely allows families to atomize and go it alone. This generalization applies significantly to reservation communities where the pickings are sparse (see also Jorgensen 1971).

592 131 423

128 592 454 [423] Using Old Agency District acreage data provides a further test of the validity of my hypothesis. Is there a correlation between family type and number of acres cultivated? A test of this type will provide a broad comparison with cash income and family type as tested in my previous analyses (Robbins 1968a, 1968b, 1970).

Correlation Ratio Diagram I tests the relationship posited. The predicted relationship between family type and agricultural resources is evident. By inspection of the row means in the diagram, we see that independent nuclear families had by far the greatest number of acres under cultivation. The mean for independent nuclear families is 27 compared with seven, eight and three for head families in extended family households, dependent nuclear families, and dependent conjugal pairs respectively. Even if the acreages for all families in multiple-family households are lumped together, using per household figures, which of course increases the mean, multiple-family households

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 79]

E99 .C7 H74 no.128

Correlation Ratio Diagram I

FAMILY TYPE AND NUMBER OF ACRES CULTIVATED, 60 OLD AGENCY DISTRICT FAMILIES, 1921*

Family Type	Y (Family Type)	Mean Acres Per Family Type
Independent Nuclear	10 6 3 4 2 1 4 2 2	27.2
Dependent Nuclear	4 1 2 1	8.0
Head Family in Extended Family Household	4 1 1	7.1
Dependent Conjugal Pair	1	3.0
Grandparent-Grandchild (Household)	2	3.0
Conjugal Pair (Household)	3	3.0

1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 Above 50

Acres Cultivated in Intervals of 5 X (Income)

η^2_{xy} = .12
$\bar{X}$ = 19.4
---- = Trend line

(Five Independent Nuclear Family households are not shown here because of limitation of space: one in the 66-70 interval, two in the 76-80 interval, one in the 111-115 interval, and one in the 151-155 interval.)

*For all families involved in co-ops, I have divided acreages evenly among participating families, unless survey records specified otherwise. There were few cases in which one participating family owned the majority of acres; generally mutual control and ownership seemed to be the prevailing mode of land use.

cultivated an average of about twelve acres, a total well below the average for independent nuclear family households. Though the correlation ratio is low, only about .12, the row means of acres per family type strongly indicate the relatively meager resources utilized by those in multiple-family households and I assert that meagerness of resources brings these families together for mutual assistance. This test lends support to my hypothesis. In 1966 families in multiple-family households received less income per family than other families, although in combination those families bring their income up to an even slightly above the overall median. My tests for the contemporary data and for the data from the 1921 survey suggest that my hypothesis about the relationship between quantities of economic resources, measured either by cash or land placed under cultivation, and family types is confirmed.

Heads of independent nuclear farming families were, on the average, in their middle 40's. This compares closely with the average age of steady earners in the 1966 sample, which is 41.9 years. The neo-colonial poverty syndrome of the past persists today. Men in their twenties, particularly those who are not married, are largely unable to secure employment, while those in their late 30's and in their 40's achieve some steady employment. At about age 50 the economic picture changes. Manual labor jobs, which comprise a high percentage of available employment, demand too much from those in their 50's so that earning capacity slides rapidly.

An additional and final test of these two variables (family types and resources) is shown in Table 9. Here I test merely participation in

128
477
241
592

Table 9

FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN CO-OPS AND FAMILY TYPE

	Not in Co-Ops (Farming Families only	In Co-Ops	
Single Families	34	9	43
Multiple-Families	1	16	17
	35	25	60

$\tau_c = .445$; $X^2 = 27.41$; p .001

co-ops, as it must be remembered that farming families and non-families in multiple-family households were, with a single exception, farming cooperatively. Only one family, a dependent nuclear family, farmed without aid from the complementary family in multiple-family households, all others in such households worked together to use their cultivated acres so far as I could determine from the survey records. The relationship posited in Table 9 is very strong and significant.

Racial Composition of Farmers and Ranchers--Old Agency District

I now analyze the number of acres cultivated and the racial composition of farmers to determine if there is a correlation between these two variables. This analysis will yield information about who was exploiting the largest share of the cultivated acres.

There were 79 heads of farming households for whom racial composition data were given in the survey records. Forty-two of them were full-bloods (53 per cent), fifteen were one-half bloods (18 per cent), nine were Whites (13 per cent), and the remaining thirteen were one-fourth Indian (5), three-quarters Indian (3), one-eight Indian (2), five-eighths Indian (1), three-eighths Indian (1), and fifteen-sixteenths Indian (1).

The 79 farming household heads cultivated a total of 1,446 acres. The breakdown of percentages of acres cultivated by racial composition of farming household heads shows that (in order of average acres) one-eighths blood farmers cultivated 175 acres, or an average of 87.5 acres; the nine White farmers 467 acres, or 52 acres each

128 563 livestock, jobs). It has been shown that meager agricultural resources created mutual assistance co-ops, either in the form of multiple-family units or small groupings of households. Those with the greatest resources (except one ranching co-op) maintained independent households. 511 592 474 The relationships demonstrated show that in the past an underclass, 128 neo-colonial status, as it has been defined, prevailed for the majority of rural reservation inhabitants; the data presented in Chapter II 241 demonstrate the persistence of this status up to 1970. The full-bloods, 735 and many others, were not able to marshall sufficient capital (land, 563 cash, equipment) to raise themselves above the underclass position. More and more of the reservation land resources have come under the control of off-reservation White ranchers, White men married to Indian women on the reservation, and enterprising mixed-bloods. The majority of those who attempted farming or ranching became discouraged by meager 511 capital and the vicissitudes of weather. The descendants of those left behind in this process of narrow selection are today engaged in sharing, for the most part, meager but different types of resources (wage labor, welfare, and leased land revenues).

511 Because of increased population and no dramatic rise in per 128 capita resources, general material circumstances and conditions on a 118 relative basis do not seem to have improved, indeed, the situation appears worse based on my analyses and criteria (household population, the incidence of multiple-family households, cooperating inter-house- 592 holds clusters, and miscellaneous dependents). The household, its size, 182 composition and economic ties with other households, has proved to be a 511

592 relocation and kin unit splintering and recombinations largely coincide
511 with economic solvency and insolvency. Those who obtain steady earnings
182 break from the kin units they formerly had joined with so as to enjoy a relatively brief period of independence in the middle class mold. But many of these, later in their family cycle, will likely host younger close kin to give and receive economic aid when earnings slump, usually around age 50 for the family heads. The cycle of initial family dependence, brief independence, and eventual mutual dependency results from
[178] meager access to resources. Since at least 1921 this has been a common pattern in the rural areas included in this study.

241 In the past (1921), as has been documented, farming conducted on
474 a very modest scale brought together those families with the fewest
592 acres under cultivation to form mutual co-op units for maximum utilization of limited resources. Labor, equipment (such as it was) and harvests were shared by small units which consisted on the average of a little
602 over two families. Usually only closely related families formed the
474 co-ops, a pattern very similar to current multiple-families and land
592 clusters which serve to maximize available low cash income, land and
592 dwellings. In 1921 farming and ranching families with above average
511 resources generally operated without assistance from others. The same
178 pattern prevails today; when families achieve modest earnings they too
474 live to themselves, although they maintain kin contacts and occasionally offer aid.

592 Household population from 1921 to 1966 rose from a median of 4.2
178 to 5.8 in the rural districts examined in this study. This occurred

41: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1944) 1945
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

531
291

72. Modern moccasins decorated with traditional design.

MODERN BLACKFEET CRAFTS

In the first thirty-five years of this century the native crafts of the Blackfeet declined both in quantity and quality. The best examples of Blackfeet handicrafts usually were the articles made as gifts for friends and relatives to use in their native ceremonies and social dances. Some articles were sold to tourists as souvenirs of their visits to the Indian country. The tourist trade was a desultory, unorganized business, and many of the articles bought by uncritical tourists were poorly made, unworthy of the Blackfeet tradition of fine craftsmanship.

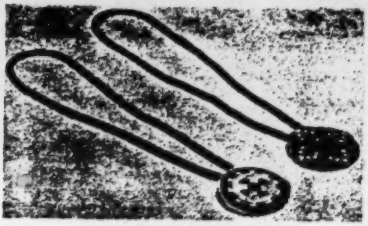
178
[431]
439

Then in 1936, the Blackfeet Craft Shop was organized, under the sponsorship of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board and the Education Division of the United States Indian Service. Its aim was not only to revive the Blackfeet tradition of expert craftsmanship, but to make craftwork a source of income to the Indians by encouraging greater production, and finding a market for the finished articles among people who appreciate the aesthetic and monetary value

474
411
[657]
[439]
[178]

[P·61-B]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 63-A]



301
531

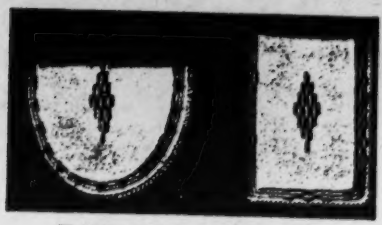
74. Beaded necklaces (modern).

of well made, genuine, useful Indian handicrafts. 474 [439] [178]

The Blackfeet Craft Shop is a cooperative organization composed of Indian craftsmen and craftswomen living on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. Its governing body is a Council whose members are elected from its general membership. It employs its own Indian business manager. The Craft Shop buys the best raw materials at wholesale for resale to its members at low prices. A Buying Committee of handicraft workers passes upon all articles submitted for sale through this organization and insists upon high standards of workmanship, in keeping with the best traditions of the tribe. For [178] example, all beadwork accepted must be sewn with durable sinew as were the articles made by early Blackfeet. Beaded designs must be in the older tradition of geometric forms, and not in the more recent floral patterns of alien origin. The committee determines both the selling price of each article and the amount the worker is to receive for it. The Blackfeet Craft Shop thus safeguards the purchaser by assuring him genuine, Indian, made handicrafts of high quality, worthy of the prices asked for them. On the other hand, it assures the Indian craftsmen and craftswomen of fair returns for their skilled labors.

Modern Blackfeet craftsmen are not 433 engaged in making mere souvenirs. They 441 are making beautiful articles that anyone 178 will be proud to own and to use. Among their most popular articles are attractively

[P·63-A]



415
531
177

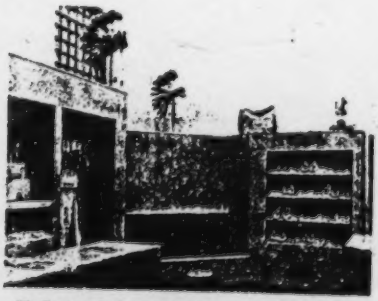
73. Modern coin purse and cigarette case.

tailored sports jackets in either Indian-tanned buckskin or commercial suede. The jackets are made in two different styles, both decorated with beadwork. Other popular articles are moccasins of soft tanned skin beaded with old Blackfeet designs, buckskin gloves, women's sport hats, beaded buckskin or suede coin purses, cigarette cases, playing card cases, playing card cases, and dolls dressed in traditional Blackfeet costumes. Blackfeet craftsmen also make a few traditional articles such as stone pipes, rawhide covered drums, and feather bonnets, which are of special interest to the collector.

433
441
178
[294]
[531]
[439]
178
439

These articles are marketed through the retail store owned and operated by the Blackfeet Craft Shop on the Park Highway near the St. Mary's entrance to Glacier National Park. They are sold retail and

444
474



76. Corner of the craft sales room in the museum.

[P·63-B]

41: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1944) 1945
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

wholesale through the Northern Plains Indians Crafts Association, located at the Museum of the Plains Indian on the Blackfeet Reservation at Browning. The Blackfeet Craft Shop is a charter member of the latter organization, which also markets handicraft made by Indians of the other reservations in Montana and Wyoming. 474 444 000

This modern program has served to stimulate Blackfeet pride in artistic accomplishment. It is enabling them to preserve and develop traditions of expert craftsmanship that were old when the first White men entered the Blackfeet country

[P.64-A]